

FRITTER

The Monthly Review

1790 - 1799

Graduate School

A. M.

1906

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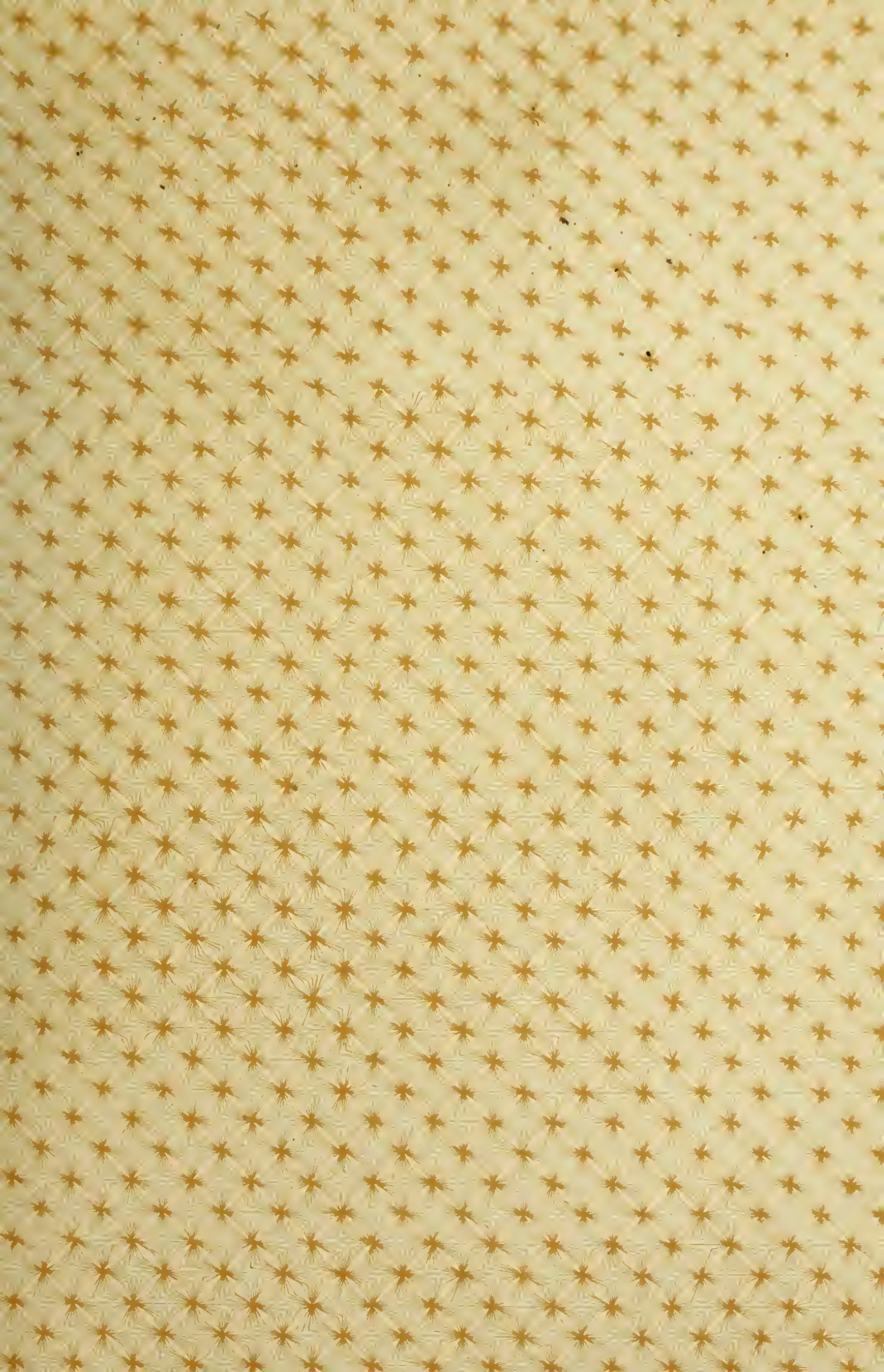
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# THE MONTHLY REVIEW

1790-1799

BY

ENOCH ABRAM FRITTER, A. B., 1892  
(Findlay College)

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## THESIS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN ENGLISH

GRADUATE SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

PRESENTED JUNE, 1906

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June. 1906.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

*Enoch Abram Fitter, A. B., 1892 (Trinity College)*

ENTITLED *The Monthly Review 1790-1799.*

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF *Master of Arts.*

*Samuel Kilham Dodge.*

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF *The English Language & Literature*



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THE MONTHLY REVIEW

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The purposes of the Monthly Review, established by Ralph Griffiths in May 1749, are specifically set forth in an advertisement at the close of the first number. This advertisement is so significant as to merit a complete reproduction.

"Undertakings that, in their execution, carry the designation of their use, need very little preface, and the present one perhaps the least.

"When the absence of title pages is obviously come to such a pass, that few readers care to take in a book, any more than a servant, without a recommendation; to acquaint the public that a summary review of the productions of the press, as they occur to notice, was perhaps more necessary than now, would be superfluous and vain.

"The cure then for this general complaint is evidently, and only, to be found in a periodical work, whose sole object should be to give a compendious account of those productions of the press, as they come out, that are worthy of notice; an account, in short, which should, in virtue of its candor, and justness of distinction, obtain authority enough for its representations to be serviceable to such as would choose to have some idea of a book before they lay out their money or time on it. This is the view and aim of the present undertaking; and it must necessarily stand or fall by the merit of the execution; on that we rest the issue without offering to prepossess the public in its favor."

A careful study of the Monthly Review from its inception in 1749 substantiates the conclusion that during this period of more than forty years Ralph Griffiths held tenaciously and consistently to his original design: all changes came as an extension of the scope and method at first purposed. The Monthly Review



printed for R. Griffiths, as declared on the title page, was the work of "Several Hands". It is, however, fortunate that this first English literary review continued under the management of so able a man for so long a period of time.

No careful review can be undertaken without giving adverse criticism as well as bestowing deserved praise. Impartiality in this work is sure to create hostility between author and reviewer. In his earlier days Wm. Gifford imagined that reviewers were "a breed of venom-spitting toads," and it has been said that "he lived to exemplify his own theory". Certainly the Closing years of the 18th. and the Opening years of the 19th. century, when periodical criticism reached its maximum height in popular esteem, belonged to no era of good-will. Gifford, who in his time was on both sides of the battle, but whose last words were those of an author, thought that nothing could be more void of conscience than the book reviewers of the twenties. He wrote:- "It has been said 'that criticism has been at all times corrupt and prejudiced'. It is possible that these epithets may have been occasionally applicable with justice to that of all times; but at no other period were such faults systematic. Individual critics might indulge their passions; now all is carried on by conspiracy. Formerly there was at least some ap-  
preach to candor and integrity; now the very thought of these regards is abandoned. Southey's resentment against Jeffrey manifested only the common feeling of authors toward their critics. The estimate put upon a book review and the attitude of the author toward the reviewer are well illustrated by the noteworthy article of Broughm(?) when he "cut to pieces the juvenal poetry of Byron" and the equally notable reply in "English Bards and Scottish Reviewers"; and the state of popular feeling is clearly evidenced by the legend that arose to the effect that Keats had been hastened to a premature death by the malice of Gifford and Croker. But in the lapse of the years much of the heat has departed from the essays of Gifford and Jeffrey, and their judgements also have become classic and are partly or wholly approved by posterity without prejudice to the books concerned. One sometimes hears the critics who censured Carlyle anathematized. Carlyle's literary method is jus-



ified by its success; but the literary critics have, likewise, their justification in the fact, that when this author is impartially estimated now, much of what they said is repeated. Sartor Rosar<sup>t</sup>us is as much a classic as The Tale of a Tub: but who can read it and not feel with a detractor of sixty years ago that "it is capital sport to know all the while fever-dream-like that actually not-bending is one of his optical convexities, cat-like-over-mouse or High Dutch?" In short, financial success is no answer to legitimate criticism: nor does failure to please the public after critics have expressed their approval, show that a book was bad, and that the critics were wrong. Merit finally wins its way and establishes itself. It is a self-evident fact, based upon the fallibility of human nature, that no critic nor any number of reviewers will, in every instance, give an absolutely correct judgement about the production under consideration. Some critics are haughty, prejudiced, partial, and even unjust. Some authors, too, are unduly sensitive and sometimes even resentful of any criticism adverse to their production. It follows from the very relations of critics to authors that charges and recriminations are of frequent occurrence. Then, too, the lot of the author has been often full of real hardships. The notable instances of Johnson, Goldsmith, Byron, and Carlyle have many parallels. Nor has the relation of author to publisher been much more congenial than that of author to critic. The book-seller, too, figures largely in the literary world. - At times the three-cornered fight among authors, critics, publishers and book-sellers has been strenuous in the extreme. So bitter has been the fight and so serious the charges that it is surely worth while to study the situation as it really existed. By some the book-seller of the 18th. century was held in as great abhorrence as are the trust magnates of to-day.

The reactions of the authors against the book-men and the critics brought forth so many recriminating charges that no publication seemed to escape the general criticism of selfishness, prejudice and corruption.

It is the purpose of the present research to ascertain the real character



of the Monthly Review and its publisher; and, if possible, to determine the true relations that it sustained to authors and book-sellers in particular and to the literature of the period in general. The plan is to note the unfavorable charges against the Monthly Review and its publisher and his staff of reviewers, to weigh the validity of these charges, and to furnish a rebuttal by the favorable mention of critics and by placing in evidence extracts from some of the leading reviews and the correspondence department of the Monthly Review itself.

Perhaps the most bitter arraignment of English Critics is found in Blackwood's Magazine 1818 Vol. II, p. 670, in a translation from the German of an article by Baron Von Lauerwinkle. In part the author says: "Nothing is more unlike the German Review than the English one. A German reviewer is a plain, sensible, sober professor, doctor or master of arts, hired by his book-seller to compose a simple analysis of a new work in the same dispassionate and reflective manner wherein an abstract of any book of antiquity dug up at Pompeii or Paestum would probably be written. It is no matter although the first leaf be wanting and the author's name a mystery; the poem, history or treatise is judged according to its own merits by the critic, and the reader is presented with one or two interesting extracts, enough to excite, not to satisfy, the appetite of his curiosity. .... An English Reviewer is a smart clever man of the world, or else a violent political zealot. He takes up a new book either to make a jest of it, and amuse his readers and himself at the expense of its author, or he makes use of the name of it merely as an excuse for writing what he thinks the author might have been better employed in doing, a dissertation, in favor of the minister, if the Review be the property of a Pittite, against him and all his measure if it be the property of a Foxite book-seller. .... It is no matter although the poor author is a man who cares for nothing at all about politics, and has never once thought of Pitt or Fox, Castlereigh or Napoleon, during the whole time of composing his book. .... The English Reviewers are of the opinion of Pericles, that politics are, or should



be, in some way or other, the subject of every man's writings. The book itself is perhaps as far both in subject and spirit, from politics as can well be imagined. The reviewer does not mind that, when he sets down to criticise it, his first question is not 'Is this book good or bad?' but it is - 'Is this writer a ministerialist or an oppositionist?' ..... The author is a mere puppet in the hands of the critic. .... He can make his doll scream or growl as he pleases; he makes it hop through a jig, or swim through a minuet, as it suits his fancy. The author is nothing, the Reviewer is everything. It is he that pockets your money, and it is not but fair that he should furnish you with amusement. .... The present Reviewers of England are as despotic as Nero or Tiberius. An oligarchy is always tyrannical in government, and such at this moment is the constitution of their literary empire. The oligarchy is made up of two partners who detest each other with a virulence of hatred never surpassed in Syracuse or in Florence. The heads of these two factions are Jeffray and Gifford. Both are men of great talents, and both are, I think, very bad Reviewers. .... I think no man can ever be a good critic, unless he be something more than a Reviewer. Mr. Gifford is merely a critic and a satirist. .... To say the least Mr. Gifford is one of the last persons whose opinions I should think of asking, with respect to a great work of genius. The glass through which he looks is indeed one of great power, but it is tinged with the darkness of bile, and although it reveals distant objects, it at the same time discolours them. .... Mr. Gifford is a mighty bigot, both in religion and politics. But no apology can be offered for the indiscriminating hatred he seems to feel towards a whole nation of his fellow-country-men, the Scots."

Speaking of Jeffrey the author says, "In truth, I suspect, that but for the political dissertations with which it is almost entirely filled, the reputation of the Edinburgh Review in spite of the cleverness of Mr. Jeffrey, would before this time have been very much on the decline. Even here, I think, it is by no means entitled to the patronage of the enlightened Briton."



In this article the author would make a clear distinction between the function of the reviewer and of the critic. The critic should be more than a mere reviewer. The reviewer should be merely an extractor - a passive compiler - At least he should never allow the personality of author or of critic to give any coloring to the review. In his charges of bigotry, prejudice, partiality perverseness and incompetency he allows of no distinction but makes the accusations general. The specific mention of Gifford and Jeffrey is merely to give point to his article by designating the leader, and possibly to admit something as to their respective talents. This article coming from a German author should be without prejudice or rancor. Its chief deficiency seems to result from its superficiality. In the very opening of the article the author says: "I went to England to transact a very delicate piece of business, not at all connected with literature; and during my stay in its metropolis, the great men whom I saw were not the men of literature." So it is clear that his judgement was based upon information either at second hand or from those not first in the literary world. It should be further observed that the editor himself is not willing to let the statement go unchallenged. A foot note says: "We suspect that our author's information is not correct with regard to some of these circumstances." This evidence against the English Reviewers, then, apparently having the merit of coming from an uninterested witness, nevertheless is subject to discount, both because of insufficient direct knowledge and of the view-point from which the testimony is given.

Goldsmith's arraignment of the "two literary reviews \* with critical newspapers and magazines without number", in his "Inquiry into the present state of Learning", \*\* will now be considered. He says: "The compilers of these resemble the Commons of Rome: they are all for leveling property, not by increasing their own,

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\* The Monthly and the Critical

\*\* Goldsmith's Works- Murry<sup>a</sup> Vol. II, p. 50



but by diminishing that of others. The man who has any good nature in his disposition must, however, be somewhat displeased to see distinguished reputations often the sport of ignorance - to see by one false pleasantry, the future peace of a worthy man's life disturbed, and this only, because he has unsuccessfully attempted to instruct or amuse us. Though ill-nature is far from being wit, yet it is generally laughed at as such. The critic enjoys the triumph, and ascribes to his parts what is due only to his effrontery. I fire with indignation when I see a person wholly destitute of education and genius indent to the press, and thus turn book-maker, adding to the sin of criticism the sin of ignorance also, whose trade is a bad one, and who are bad workmen in the trade". It must not be over-looked that Goldsmith himself was in this very article writing a satire, and allowance must be made for an over-drawn figure. And again when he says:\*§"It is enough that the age has already produced instances of men pressing foremost in the lists of fame, and worthy of better times; schooled by adversity into a hatred of their kind flying from thought to drunkenness, yielding to the united pressure of labor, penury, and sorrow, sinking unheeded, without one friend to drop a tear on their unattended obsequies, and indebted to charity for a grave. The author, when patronized, has naturally recourse to the book-seller. There can not be imagined a combination more prejudicial to taste than this. It is the interest of the one to allow as little for writing, and the other to write as much as possible. Accordingly, tedious compilations and periodical magazines are the result of their joint endeavors. .... In these circumstances, the author bids adieu to fame and writes only for bread. .... A long habit of writing for bread thus turns the ambition of every author into avarice. .... Thus the man, who under the protection of the great, might have done honor to humanity, when patronized only by the book-seller, becomes a thing little superior to the fellow who works at the press". A true explanation of this tirade seemingly so much against book-sellers is found in the o-

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\*§ Ibid pp. 47 and 48



pening of Chapter XI of the first edition, which reads: "But there are still some men, whom fortune has blessed with affluence, to whom the muse pays her morning visit, not like a creditor but a friend; to this happy few who have leisure to polish what they write, I would direct my advice, which consists in a few words: write what you think, regardless of the critics. To break, or at least to loosen those bonds, first put on by caprice and afterward drawn hard by fashion, is my wish. I have assumed the critic only to dissuade from criticism". Whatever others have tried to read into Goldsmith's Inquiry falls to the ground if it is not in accord with Goldsmith's own statement of the purpose in the production.

Perhaps Goldsmith's most bitter, and possibly the most resentful, arraignment of Griffiths and the critics is the following, found in the "Citizen of the World". §§- "There are a set of men called answerers of books, who take upon themselves the republic of letters, and distribute reputation by the sheet: they somewhat resemble the eunuchs in a seraglio, who are incapable of giving pleasure themselves, and hinder those that would. These answerers have no other employment but to cry out Duncce, and Scribbler: to praise the dead and revile the living: to grant a man of confessed abilities some share of merit: to applaud twenty block-heads, in order to gain the reputation of candor: and to revile the moral character of the men whose writings they can not injure. \*Such wretches are kept in pay by some mercenary book-seller who himself takes this dirty work off their hands, as all that is required is to be very abusive and very dull. Every poet of any genius is sure to find such enemies: he feels, though he seems to despise, their malice: they make him miserable here, and in the pursuit of empty fame, at last he gains solid anxiety"....."If he has money, he may <sup>buy</sup> reputation from your book- answerers, as well as a monument from the guardians of the temple". In this instance

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§§ Goldsmith's Works- Murray Vol. II, p. 123.

\* Monthly Review Nov. 1759 (In reply to Kenrick's attack)



let Goldsmith himself answer the charge and determine in his own words the exact weight above set forth. He says in the Citizen of the world: "A man of letters at present, whose works are valuable, is perfectly sensible of their value. Every polite member of the community, by buying what he writes, contributes to reward him. The ridicule, therefore, of living in a garret might have been wit in the last age, but continues so no longer, because no longer true. A writer of real merit now may easily be such, if his heart be set only on fortune; and for those who have no merit, it is but fit that such should remain in merited obscurity. He may now refuse an invitation to dinner, without fearing to incur his patron's displeasure, or to starve by remaining at home. He may now venture to appear in company with just such clothes as other men generally wear, and talk even to princes with all the conscious superiority of wisdom. Though he can not boast of fortune here, yet he can bravely assert the dignity of independence".

In answer to the charges against Reviewers, by Baron Von Lauerwinkel and for that matter to all detractors, - Goldsmith himself included, - let the Citizen of the world again speak. \*\* "But the suffering of the poets in other countries is nothing when compared to his distresses here: the names of Spenser and Oatway, Butler and Dryden, are every day mentioned as a national reproach: some of them lived in a state of precarious indigence, and others literally died of hunger. At present, the few poets of England no longer depend on the great for subsistence: they have now no other patrons but the public; and the public collectively considered, is a good and generous master. It is, indeed, too frequently mistaken as to the merits of every candidate for favor; but to make amends, it is never mistaken long. A performance may be forced for a time into reputation; but, destitute of real merit, it soon sinks: time, the touchstone of what is truly valuable, will

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\*\* Murray's Goldsmith Vol. II, pp. 369 and 370.



soon discover the fraud; and an author should never arrogate to himself any share of success, till his works have been read at least ten years with satisfaction".

The following, aimed at the writings of the lords &c., it seems is irony, yet it is worth considering. § "Believe me, my friend, hunger has a most amazing faculty of sharpening genius; and he who, with a full belly, can think like a hero, after a course of fasting, shall rise to the sublimity of a demi-god. .... It is just so with wit: did I, for my life, wish to be well served, I would apply only to those who made it a trade, and lived by it. You smile at the oddity of my opinion: but be assured, my friend, that wit is in some measure mechanical, and what a man long habituated to catch at even its resemblance, will at last be happy enough to possess the substance. By a long habit of writing he acquires a justness of thinking, and a mastery of manner, which holiday writers, even with ten times his genius, may vainly attempt to equal".

Whatever Goldsmith has said in ridicule of the Reviewers and Book-sellers should be taken with a grain of allowance, due to the temperament and temper of the author. In evidence of this necessity, the following extract from a letter of Goldsmith to his uncle is given: \* I have thrown myself into a state of settled melancholly, and utter disgust of all that this life brings with it. Whence this romantic turn, that all our family are possessed with? Whence this love for every place and every country but that in which we reside? for every occupation but our own? this desire for fortune and yet this eagerness to dissipate? I had learned from books to be generous, before I was taught from experience the necessity of being prudent. .... - But I find myself again falling into my gloomy habits of thinking"\*\*\*

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§ Murray's Goldsmith Vol. II, pp. 363.

\* Murray's Goldsmith Vol. IV pp. 417-418

\*\* Ibid



That Goldsmith suffered at times from the lack of worldly comforts is not to be disputed: that his genius chafed and fretted under the burden of hack-work is not a matter of wonder: that he quarreled with the Reviewers and Book-sellers is not to be denied: and that he was often misunderstood and unfavorably criticised is a matter of common knowledge. His works entitled him to a high rank among literary men; but that his sufferings were from insufficient remuneration for labor performed, is not borne out by the facts; it is to be attributed rather to his lack of economy in business management. § "When he was writing those letters in the Public Ledger-'with pleasure and instruction for others', Mr. Forster says, 'though at the cost of suffering to himself', he was receiving for them alone what would be equivalent to \$1,000.00 a year. No man can affirm that \$1,000.00 a year is not amply sufficient for all the material wants of life. .... If Goldsmith had received ten times as much money as the book-sellers gave him, he would still have died in debt". Goldsmith says of his Voltaire: §§ "You know already by the title, that it is no more than a catch-penny; however, I spent but four weeks upon the whole performance, for which I received twenty pounds". For the 123 letters that make up the Citizen of the World he received a guinea each, or a value of six hundred dollars at that time. Animated Nature brought him an advance of \$2500.00 and the offer of \$2500.00 from Davies to induce him to lay it aside for 'A History of England'. It was not the lack of money, but the improvident use of it, that caused the suffering. EVEN IN THE MOST FAMOUS OF ALL CASES-his engagement with the Griffiths- Goldsmith suffered, not from need of bodily comforts, but from the mental prangs of the struggling genius within him that would neither permit him to bear the over-sight of Mrs. Griffiths nor allow him to chain himself to the work of a mere hack. His poetic soul would not endure the work "whose whole secret con-

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§ English Men of Letters- Goldsmith p.55

§§ Murray's Goldsmith Vol. IV



sisted in a strict adherence to two rules: the one always to observe that the picture might have been better if the painter had taken more time or pains", "and the other to praise the work". "That he should have been thus pressed was no necessity of the case; at all events we need not on this score begin now to abuse the book-sellers or the public of that day. We may dismiss at once for all the oft-repeated charges of ingratitude and neglect"\*§.

The disagreement between Goldsmith and Griffiths, of which so much has been said, -by Forster and others- is treated in about the correct way in De Quincey's Essays on the Poets. "We suspect that poor Oliver, in his guileless heart, never congratulated himself on having made a more felicitous bargain. .... It is important to remember that Goldsmith, at this time in his twenty-ninth year, was simply as usher at an obscure boarding school; had never practiced writing for the press; and had not even himself any faith at all in his own capacity for writing. It is a singular fact, which we have on Goldsmith's own authority, that until his thirtieth year, it never entered into his head that literature was his natural vocation. .... Still though these hardships turned out so beneficially to Goldsmith's intellectual interests, so much to the advantage of all who have since delighted in his works, not the less they were hardships that imposed heavy degradation".\*

Had Boswell instead of Forster been Goldsmith's biographer, he would have put his hero in a true light before the world. Boswell would have emphasized the brighter and nobler phases of Goldsmith's life and character. He would have stated truly that Goldsmith did not break entirely with the Griffiths: that Griffiths afterwards employed Goldsmith: that when Goldsmith began to do better than

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\*§ Murray's Goldsmith Vol.IV, p. 55 (English Men of Letters)

\* English Men of Letters - Goldsmith p. 27



mere hack work, he found a public speedily enough: that "he got the market rate for his work": that Goldsmith could bestow honeyed praise on the meritorious, as when he says:- "as to our author in particular, his learning is extensive, and his candor, good sense and modesty, serve to adorn it": or he could lash the author into fury by saying: "The classical reader will perceive that the spirit of the original is, in a manner, totally extinguished in this translation. Indeed such is the 'gentleman's' obscurity in some places, such are his mistakes of his author's meaning in others: such is the meanness, affectation, and impropriety of his language throughout, that it is all really a matter of surprise to us how such a work came into print; especially when we take the poetry into account, which is below all criticism, and even contempt.....the present performance is totally destitute of every merit which might serve to qualify our censure": \*\* that in the criticism of Wilkie's *Epigoniad* he is neither indolent nor dull, as§ "our author claps a big bag on the giant's (Polyphemus) back,

' -around his shoulders flung,

This bag enormous by a cable hung'-

Here is a large bag and a very strong rope to tie it withal: but we can not conceive what use the cyclops had for such a bag, unless he chose to wear it as our physicians wear their swords, merely for ornament". And after pointing out the use of the word hands at least forty times by the author, Goldsmith remarks:"To the foregoing citations we could have added many others of the same sort; but these are more than sufficient to convince the critics at George's and the Bedford that verses have hands as well as feet".

One notes with pleasure that "Voltaire's beauties as a writer are many

\*\* Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*.

§ Monthly Review Sept. 1757 p. 228



and obvious: his faults few, and those well-concealed under the dazzle of his abilities". And of the "Memoirs of Madame De Maintenon" he facetiously remarks:- "We are at a loss in what class to place such amphibious productions; as they are generally an assemblage of truth and falsehood; in which history wears the face of romance, and romance assumes the appearance of history; where the writer's endeavors are equally exerted in rendering trifles important, and subjects of importance trifling. Who but must smile at accounts wherein some little personage, indebted to the historian, perhaps, for notice takes the lead in a history of Europe, and connects its incidents! It brings to memory the courts of ancient kings, where a dwarf was generally employed as master of ceremonies". §§

These quotations from Goldsmith's criticism, given in the Monthly Review, are characteristic, not only of Goldsmith's, but of most of the performances that attempted anything beyond a mere summary of articles reviewed. Every article written by Goldsmith for the Monthly Review is interesting, clear and pointed. They are in no sense open to the objection of dullness or of perfunctoriness! In the entire set of reviews, sixteen in number, written by Goldsmith for the Monthly Review, there is but a single instance in which there is evidence of any malignity toward the author himself; and this is found when the critic says: "If any should imagine that we have been rather severe upon this author, let it be observed in our excuse, that his presumptuous attack of so superior a character as that of the late Mr. Pope, has justly divested himself of all title to favor".\*

One can not entirely justify Kenrick's attack on Goldsmith as given in the Monthly Review, Nov. 1759; but he finds some compensation in the fact that this

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§§ Monthly Review July 1757 - p. 81

\* The Epigoniad -- Monthly Review Sept. 1759



is an isolated instance of such work in the Monthly Review, and he may really console himself and give honor to Ralph Griffiths for the neat apology given for the "undesigned offence" as it appears in the Monthly Review for June 1762.

This division of our subject would not seem complete without noting that in the Critical Review for November 1757 there is a letter addressed "To the old gentlewoman who directs the Monthly". And when Griffiths asserted that the Monthly was not written by "physicians without practice, authors without learning, men without decency, or writers without judgement"; Smollet replied: "The Critical Review is not written by a parcel of obscure hirelings, under the restraint of a book-seller and his wife, who presume to revise, alter, and amend the articles occasionally. The principal writers in the Critical Review are unconnected with book-sellers, unawed by old women, and independent of each other". And it is a great relief to know that Johnson from his vantage position of independence and keener judgement, speaking of the reviewers, says:§"I think them very impartial: I do not know of an instance of partiality" and "The Monthly Reviews are not deists; but they are Christians with as little Christianity as may be: and are for pulling down all establishments. The Critical Reviewers are for supporting the Church and State. The Critical Reviewers, I believe, often reviewed without reading the books through; but lay hold of a topic and wrote chiefly from their own minds. The Monthly Reviewers are duller men, and are glad to read the books through".

The scope of the work attempted by the Reviewers was extended from time to time to meet the requirements for which the Monthly Review was established. The March number of 1790 contains the following leading articles:- Life of Freder-



ick the Great, Works of Samuel Johnson, Elements of Geometry, Original letters of John Fenn, History of Scotland, Reasons for the revision of the Bible, Diseases of Children, Verses to John Howard, Foreign Literature, Asiatic Researches, Lectures on Education, Trade and Commerce, Slave Trade; and short articles on Biography, Law, Voyages and Travels, Novels, Poetry and Drama, Miscellaneous, The Test Act, Theology and Polemics; and reviews of eighteen single Sermons. This is an extended scope , and to this was added a Foreign Department usually consisting of about one hundred pages per volume



A study of the foreign department of almost any number of the Monthly Review will reveal a comparative treatment averaging about as the following tabulated data from Volume 21 - September to December, 1796

| Source                            | German                    |                    | French                    |                    | Italian                   |                    | Sanskrit                  |                    | Greek                     |                    |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Nature of<br>Articles<br>Reviewed | No.<br>of<br>au-<br>thors | No.<br>of<br>pages | No.<br>of<br>au-<br>thors | No.<br>of<br>pages | No.<br>of<br>au-<br>thors | No.<br>of<br>pages | No.<br>of<br>au-<br>thors | No.<br>of<br>pages | No.<br>of<br>au-<br>thors | No.<br>of<br>pages |
| Literature & Art                  | 5                         | 18                 | 7                         | 13                 | 1                         | 2                  | 1                         | 9                  | 1                         | 10                 |
| Government                        | 3                         | 16                 | 7                         | 10                 | 1                         | 1                  |                           |                    |                           |                    |
| Philosophy                        | 3                         | 12                 | 1                         | 1                  |                           |                    |                           |                    |                           |                    |
| Scientific                        | 6                         | 7                  | 1                         | 1                  | 2                         | 5                  |                           |                    |                           |                    |
| Mathematics                       |                           |                    | 1                         | 5                  |                           |                    |                           |                    |                           |                    |
| Total Articles                    | 17                        |                    | 17                        |                    | 4                         |                    | 1                         |                    | 1                         |                    |
| Total Pages                       |                           | 53                 |                           | 30                 |                           | 8                  |                           | 9                  |                           | 10                 |

The principal authors reviewed or quoted as authority in this Volume are :- German; Schiller, Schlegel, Blumenbach, Wieland, Böttiger and Tiedeman.

French; Texier, Chamfort, Mirabeau and Diderot.  
American; Jna. Edwards.



In Criticism of Schiller, the following characteristic statement appears:- " The author appears to us to have revealed the Grecian epigram in elegant simplicity. .... in some there is a gay romantic wildness of fancy which reminds us of Midsummer Night's Dream and As You Like It. We doubt whether the last tale in the conversations of German emigrants could have been invented by a mind that, from its powers, had not a right to claim some affinity to the mind of Shakespeare".

( Monthly Review Vol. XXI, p. 575.)

The Criticism of Burns is interesting , as it reveals the Critic's insight into the sweetness of the singer, but at the same time exhibits the ordinary prejudices of the Englishman.

" His simple strains, artless and unadorned, seem to flow without effort from the native feelings of his heart. They are always nervous, sometimes inelegant, often natural, simple , and sublime. .... His verses are sometimes struck off with a delicacy, and artless simplicity, that charms like the bewitching though irregular touches of Shakespeare. We regret that these poems are written in some measure in an unknown tongue, being composed in the Scottish dialect. .... We have used the freedom to modernize the orthography a little, wherever the measure would permit, to render it less disgusting to our readers south of the Tweed. .... In justice to our readers as well as to,our author, we must observe that this collection may be compared to a heap of wheat carelessly winnowed-



ed. Some grain of the most excellent quality is mixed with a little chaff, and half ripened corn. .... We never reckon our task fatiguing, when we can find among a great heap a single pearl of price: but how pitiable is our lot, when we must toil and toil, and can find nothing but tiresome uniformity, with neither faults to rouse, nor beauty to animate the jaded spirits"\*

\*(Monthly Review Vol. LXXV p. 439)

In Vol. XII (New) is a particularly characteristic article on "Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language" covering 32 pages. In the early part of the article the following unique statement occurs, viz.:— "The ingen<sup>i</sup>us Abbe la Blanc observes that the French have made ours one of the learned languages: that even their women learn it, and have renounced Italian, to study English; yet the same author takes notice, that we had not so much as a good dictionary or hardly a tolerable grammar".

The critic gives numerous quotations from the work, and the edit<sup>r</sup>or adds many foot-notes by way of explanation and illustration, with occasional criticisms. Johnson's accuracy in many particulars is highly commended, and as an illustration and proof of this prevailing accuracy and painstaking care, the word 'put' is shown to have been traced through "one and twenty different significations" and that, "it with its compounds has forty-four other uses". The word "have" is shown to have "at least twenty different significations" and in each case reputable authors are quoted in substantiation.

The good intentions of the reviewer are made evident by the following quotation:— "here we should conclude; but, perhaps, some apology may be thought necessary for ourselves on account of this precipitated article: for precipitated it has been, in the hope of obliging our readers; and to their candid consideration we submit the only true excuse we have to offer, viz.:— the very short time we have allowed ourselves for the consideration of so extensive a performance. It is not to be supposed that in the few days (nine days) elapsed since the publication of



these large volumes, we could peruse the whole, or even so large a portion of them as might serve to justify a critical detail; but from a persuasion that our readers would be impatient for some account of so important a work, and the earlier it was communicated, the more welcome it would be. So in general we have chosen to let Mr. Johnson speak for himself".



Stevenson's criticism of the "Lyrical Ballads", in Volume XII pp. 202-210, June 1799, is well worthy of careful study. This criticism is especially refreshing when taken in connection with a letter from Mrs. Coleridge to her husband and the Wordsworths in 1798 wherein she says: "The Lyrical Ballads are not liked at all by any". And it is doubtful if those poems would escape with a juster criticism at present were the question brought to an issue before our leading critics.

"When we confess that our author has had the art of pleasing and interesting in no common way by his natural delineations of human passions, human characters, and human incidents, we must add that these effects were not produced by poetry".

The above is noted as to the genius, and the following as to the species.

1. " Rime of the Ancient Mariner:- ..... Though it seems a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence ..... yet there are in it poetical touches of an exquisite kind".

2 " The Nightingale:- Sings a strain of beautiful poetry - Miltonic, yet original : reflective , and interesting, in an uncommon degree".

3. " Lines on the first mild day in March :- abound with beautiful sentiments from a polished mind".

4. " We are Seven:- innocent and pretty infantile prattle".

5. " The Thorn:- All our author's pictures in colour are dark as those of Rembrandt or Spanioletto".

6. " The Dungeon:- Here candour and tenderness for criminals seem pushed to excess".

7. " The Mad Mother:-admirable painting! in Michael Angelo's bold and masterly manner".

" So much genius and originality are discovered in this publication that we wish to see another from the same hand, written on more elevated subjects



and in a more cheerful disposition". From the vantage point gained through the perspective of passing decades it is now seen that the critic fairly estimated the worth of the productions under consideration. Then , too, the very style of the critic stamps him as a master of his art and gives him a position among men of literature. Many other examples of high art in criticism could be adduced.

The treatment of Chatterton's critics Vol. LXVI, pp. 206-211 and 321-334 is well worthy of the study of the literary philosopher.

The Reviews of Washington's "Letters" Vol. XXI p. 475, and the Editor's apology and corrections Vol. XXIX, p. 118 are strong evidences of a desire to deal justly, and to make amends and corrections in the interests of truth.



It seems that on the opening of the new series of the Monthly Review in 1790, readers and book-sellers in general expected a marked change in the scope, plan and policy of the publication. But that the publisher had no such aims or intentions is verified by the following notice appearing in the opening number:- "The experience of nearly half a century has effectively convinced us that the plan of the Monthly Review being found that which is most useful, has, consequently, proved most acceptable to the public".

When requested to enlarge the foreign department, the publisher replied:-"We shall not improve on the notices of foreign books: because it pleases neither the public nor ourselves". And in a later period when solicited to give more space to continental and classic books, the publisher replied as follows:- "In these deranged times, we are too frequently obliged to to detach ourselves , for a season, from the consideration of many late respectable publications, that are unconnected with the more interesting topics of the day. Indeed, as subjects of learning , science, or taste, are now little heeded, in most parts of Europe, we are necessitated to pay our earliest regards to the principal productions of those writers who employ their pens on the Great Questions by which all parties are at present so earnestly agitated; and in which the issue of the general welfare of mankind, in particular, is highly concerned".

The scope of the work, then, seems to be limited; first, to a review of the books vital to the times; and , second, to a department of correspondence similar to the editorial department in modern magazines. Each volume contains an appendix of about one hundred pages devoted exclusively to the review of foreign literature.

In general the publisher aims, quite properly, at books that pay; and the world, too, when it can do without great writers, is invariably obliged to do so. History is crowded with illustrations of the way the thing works. Vergil and Dante would have starved on literary achievements alone. The Vergil who might



have starved in his own day, has become a real source of profit to modern publishers and book-sellers. It would be a mistake, too, to suppose that no effort was made in the days of the early publishers to keep pace with the increase of books and to give considerable space to the review of those works deemed most likely to suit the taste of current opinion.

To say that the Monthly Reviewers were faithful to their task as they understood it, that they were generally impartial in their treatment of authors, that they had a policy to which they tenaciously adhered and that they were generally fearless, is only a tardy recognition of their services, and an acknowledgement of the sterling integrity of the publisher, Ralph Griffiths.

"Out of their own mouths ye shall judge them", is a good motto to follow in considering the character of men. So articles have been selected from Correspondences to substantiate the views set forth above. Griffiths, in replying to Churchmen and their criticisms of the Monthly Reviewers (Vol. VI, P. 240) says: "How is the candid Reviewer to conduct himself? The answer is obvious. Let him, following his own ideas of right and wrong, persevere in the honest discharge of his duty, respecting both writers and readers, and remain contented with the applause of the discerning and impartial few, and with the approbation of his own mind. As for those who can not or who dare not presume to think for themselves, and who are unable to emancipate themselves from the fetters of a system it is not to be expected that they will admire in others, that independence of sentiment of which they know not the value, their approbation of his labors would, indeed, be fatal! As it must be incompatible with the esteem of the wise and the good, with the honor of Truth, and with the best interests of society. That whenever, in our critical capacity, we see occasion to deliver our opinion on what may appear to us to be falsehood, or absurdity, or as tending, in any way, to diminish the happiness of mankind, from whatever quarter the error may proceed, on whatever



Authority it may be advanced- we shall continue, with all decent freedom, to express our real sentiments on the subject". This is surely a fair statement of the duties of a critic for the Review, with a clear declaration of the policy to be pursued. But if any thing further is needed, consider this:-" In the distribution of praise and censure to which our office calls us, we have frequently the mortification to find, that our opinions do not exactly correspond with those which the authors entertain of their own productions. Unqualified and unsupported applause, as it would be easier for us , would often be more welcome to them, than that diligent and impartial discrimination , which alone can render our labors useful to the public". (Monthly Review Jan. 1791, p. 113) This is in reply to a letter from the authoress, Mrs. Macaulay-Graham, in which she had complained that the Reviewers had been unduly severe in the treatment of her "Letters on Education". To show more fully his personal attitude, Mr. Griffiths says further:- "Why should a mere difference of opinion be a matter of offense? Our only reason for bringing the subject of these lectures again before our readers, is, to express our regret, that our duty to the public should have obliged us in any degree to hurt the feelings of a female writer of whose abilities as a historian we have often expressed our unequivocal admiration, in whose general principles of civil policy we have always heartily concurred, and to whom , notwithstanding the defects which are observed in her last production, we readily ascribe the merit of great intellectual energy united with purest philanthropy". This is worthy of the gallantry of a Chesterfield and the sweetness of Matthew Arnold.

It is well to keep constantly in mind that one of the most trying things to an author is the consideration of the criticisms unfavorable to his work. It is not only probable, but most likely, that the author absorbed in the single line of thought most vivid in his own consciousness has not seen the true relation of his production to a wider scope of knowledge, and is , consequently, less fitted to judge wisely of his work than is the critic with his wider range of experience and learning. The position of the Reviewers in this particular is nice-



ly set forth in an editorial on the subject of controversy with an author. (May 1794 p. 118):- "Were we to enter into the lists with every author who differs from our judgment of his works, the debate on a single publication might become as tedious as a suit in chancery. ....We can have no personal motive either for showing them favor or for treating them with severity- justice they have a right to expect at our hands.....When we censure an author , we assign our reasons; if they be weak, his will be the triumph. An impartial public will judge between us, and decide with fairness. It forms a court of appeals in the dernier resort: and to its decision all must bow". And again in Vol. X p. 360 - "Truth never shrinks: and while we can honestly say that we contend not for the victory but for the Truth, it is not in the power either of sophistry or of argument to give us alarm". Surely this is a noble manifestation of firmness, impartiality, and a high sense of justice. In this connection the following from Shaftsbury, used as a motto on the title page of volume XXVII is worthy of the prominence given it- " I take upon myself absolutely to condemn the fashionable and prevailing custom of inveighing against critics as the common enemy, the pests, and incendiaries of writing and letters. I assert on the contrary, that they are the props and pillars of this building, and that, without the encouragement and propagation of such a race we should remain as Gothic architects as ever".

The Reviewers seemed to follow carefully the advice they once gave to a critic who was berating them. They advised him not to be "over-hasty, but rather cautious of running into extremes". In reply to a correspondent who was dissatisfied with the criticisms on "Mr. Burke's Reflections", they reply:- "He thinks we discover a'determined spirit of opposition to that wholework'. We have read and heard of others who are very opposite opinioned, and who have accused us of an undue partiality in the Rt. Hon. Gentleman's favor. This is but one more added to the instances that occur daily (and to nobody, perhaps, oftener than to Reviewers) of the impossibility of pleasing everybody".

In discussing "Paine's Rights of Man" (Vol. V p. 82) an editorial



says:- "In many particulars we think the new constitution of France much better than our own, and especially in those most important points, which relate to the election and duration of the Representative body, and to the entire separation of religion from politics. ....If we continue to impede and confound and embarrass the Kingdom of Heaven , by mixing it with the kingdoms of this world, after they have been severed by an assembly which some among us do not scruple (with what justice, or liberality, we leave it to them to settle) to stigmatize as an assembly of infidels and atheists, it would be disagreeable to us, not only as Protestants, but as disciples of Christ and as the servants of the living God".

Again, having been charged by an opponent with malicious criticism - "Some Tory , or,perhaps, some Whig; for these are much the same these days", they retort:- "If an enemy to misrepresentation means to charge us with a wilful offence of that kind, we assure him that he does us great injustice. We wrote what we believed, and we believe still what we wrote".

That compliments and detractions were uttered with equal candor and frankness is exemplified in criticisms of Edmund Burke. (Vol. V p. 205), The Reviewer says:- "Mr. Burke's splendid and virulent attack has turned the minds of all Englishmen to the study of the French Revolution" . While on pp. 320-322 in considering "Burke's Great Exaggeration". the following appears:- "The Rt. Hon. Gentleman has become a perfect antiquary, a very Hearne in politics, .... and seems to entertain such a sovereign contempt for all that is modern, that we fear action and reaction will be equal: he in some degree experiencing a reciprocal neglect from his contemporaries, whom he has so much despised".

It is well known that the Monthly Review was anti- slavery: yet in reviewing an article by David Ransey, an American pro-slavery advocate, it says after considerable commendatory comment on the style and content of the article:- "This recommendation seems to be due to the work, which was written with knowledge, penetration, temper and liberality".



As to Publishers and Book-sellers: The charge has been made that certain publishers were singled out by Griffiths for favorable or for unfavorable criticism. When one takes into consideration the Variety of subjects treated and the great number of books reviewed, and carefully notes the general fairness toward both authors and publishers, he will exonerate Griffiths from the unjust charges. The range of criticism embraced the domains of Law, History, Biography, Education, Agriculture, Horticulture, Poetry, Politics, Police, Theology, Polemics, Single Sermons, Correspondence, and Miscellaneous subjects as directly affecting the English people; and to this was added a Foreign Department of no mean extent.

A careful tabulation of the articles reviewed in the volumes of Sept.- Dec. 1790; Jan.- Apr. 1795; May-Aug. 1797; and Jan.- Apr. 1799; gives the following remarkable showing:-

| <u>Name of Book-seller</u><br><u>or publisher.</u> | <u>Number of articles</u><br><u>reviewed.</u> | <u>Neutral</u><br><u>review.</u> | <u>Favorable</u><br><u>review.</u> | <u>Unfavorable</u><br><u>review.</u> |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Cadell                                             | 23                                            | 13                               | 7                                  | 3                                    |
| Robinsons                                          | 38                                            | 16                               | 12                                 | 10                                   |
| Johnson                                            | 47                                            | 26                               | 16                                 | 5                                    |
| Kearsley                                           | 8                                             | 4                                | 2                                  | 2                                    |
| Richardson                                         | 10                                            | 5                                | 2                                  | 3                                    |
| Stockdale                                          | 19                                            | 9                                | 3                                  | 7                                    |
| Hookham                                            | 9                                             | 5                                | 3                                  | 1                                    |
| Lane                                               | 3                                             | 2                                | 0                                  | 1                                    |
| Dilly                                              | 24                                            | 14                               | 7                                  | 3                                    |
| Murray                                             | 6                                             | 5                                | 1                                  | 0                                    |
| Rivingtons                                         | 16                                            | 4                                | 6                                  | 6                                    |
| Evans                                              | 3                                             | 2                                | 0                                  | 1                                    |
| Debrett                                            | 25                                            | 13                               | 6                                  | 6                                    |
| Elmsley                                            | 3                                             | 3                                | 0                                  | 0                                    |
| Longmans                                           | 14                                            | 7                                | 3                                  | 4                                    |
| Deighton                                           | 4                                             | 1                                | 1                                  | 2                                    |
| Kerby                                              | 3                                             | 0                                | 1                                  | 2                                    |
| Robson & Co.                                       | 7                                             | 1                                | 1                                  | 5                                    |
| Nicol                                              | 7                                             | 1                                | 5                                  | 1                                    |
| White                                              | 7                                             | 1                                | 4                                  | 3                                    |
| Jordan                                             | 4                                             | 4                                | 0                                  | 0                                    |
| Dodsley                                            | 4                                             | 2                                | 2                                  | 0                                    |
| Egertons                                           | 4                                             | 1                                | 2                                  | 1                                    |
| Symonds                                            | 3                                             | 1                                | 0                                  | 2                                    |
| Butterworth                                        | 3                                             | 2                                | 1                                  | 0                                    |
| Totals                                             | 295                                           | 142                              | 85                                 | 68                                   |

The above table is very significant, and in effect conclusively refutes the charge of collusion on the part of publishers, book-sellers, and



critics to mistreat or to defraud the authors.

The table is the result of careful study, and it represents all the leading articles of the volumes considered. Nearly one-half of the articles received a neutral criticism; and the remaining are almost equally ranked as favorable and unfavorable. The favorable outnumber the adverse criticisms, and they are distributed apparently without reference to authors, publishers or book-sellers.



The research work giving rise to this thesis has been pursued with an endeavor to ascertain the true relations that existed between the Editor and his Assistants, the Publisher and the Book-seller, the Literary Hack and his Employer, the Author and the Critic as they maintained in connection with the Monthly Review. The task was begun with deep-seated prejudices against the editor, the publishers, the book-sellers and the critics; but as the study has progressed all prejudices have been eradicated by the clear light of a more intimate knowledge of the facts. Gradually I have been led to see Ralph Griffiths as a sagacious business man strictly honorable in all his affairs. Any seeming harshness toward his assistants was more apparent than real, as is plainly set forth in our study of his relations to Goldsmith. All evidence obtainable points to the conclusion that in his dealings with his publishers he succeeded in maintaining the most cordial and exemplary relations. He employed the best critics obtainable, and he paid them market price for their labors. Not a critic of the highest order, yet he had a remarkable discernment in selecting the right persons to do the work for him. The examples we have adduced fully justify this tribute to his genius in this particular. The hack writer was generally treated with all the consideration he deserved, and paid living wages for all he did. And it seems an invariable rule that when the hack manifested real literary ability he received due appreciation. The sufferings of the writers of that time seem to have been more the results of improvidence on their part than any necessity of the circumstances.

That there were no improper arrangements between publisher and book-seller, between critics and publisher or book-seller seems clear from the fact that, in the Monthly Review at least, the books of certain publishers were criticised sometimes favorably and sometimes unfavorably; and, judging from reviews of works that have since become noted, one is led to believe that the critics in general did their work well. A few notable examples to the contrary are found; but these our study has shown to be really exceptions to the general rule.



## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

English Men of Letters, Edited by John Morley

Published by Harper Brothers, 1902 ( N. Y. )

|            |                        |
|------------|------------------------|
| Burke      | John Morley            |
| Coleridge  | H D Traill             |
| De Quincey | David Masson           |
| Goldsmith  | William Black          |
| Johnson    | Leslie Stephen         |
| Lamb       | Alfred Ainger          |
| Shelley    | John Addington Symonds |
| Sheridan   | Mrs. Margaret Oliphant |
| Southey    | Edward Dowden          |
| Sterne     | H D Traill             |
| Wordsworth | Frederick W H Myers    |

Library of the World's Best Literature, Edited by Charles Dudley Warner

R S Peale and A J Hill 1896 (N. Y. )

Boswell, James-by Chas. F Johnson Vol. XIV

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor- by George E Woodberry Vol.VII

Goldsmith, Oliver- by Chas. Mills Gayley Vol. X

Wordsworth, William - by Frederick W H Myers XVII

## M i s c e l l a n e o u s -

Booksellers, Authors and Publishers-Fortnightly Review Vol LXIX p. 255

" , Living Age Vol. XII p. 260

Bookselling in England- Chambers Journal III, p. 204

Boswell, James-Monthly Review Vols. LXXXVIII and LXXXIX.

Coleridge - Letters Edited by E H Coleridge 2Vols. Houghton 1895

Critical Review- Contemporary - Vols.



Davis- Life of Garrick, Vol.II, p.147

De Quincey, Thomas - An Essay in his Miscellaneous Essays (On Goldsmith )

Dobson , Austin- Life of Goldsmith. The Great Writer Series

Forster, John -Life of Goldsmith.

Hawkins - Life of Samuel Johnson - pp. 416-420.

Irving, Washington - Life of Goldsmith 2 Vols.

Johnson, Samuel-(Boswell's Life of-)

Macaulay, T B. Critical and Historical Essays. (Putnam 1897)

Murray - Life of Goldsmith 4 Vols.

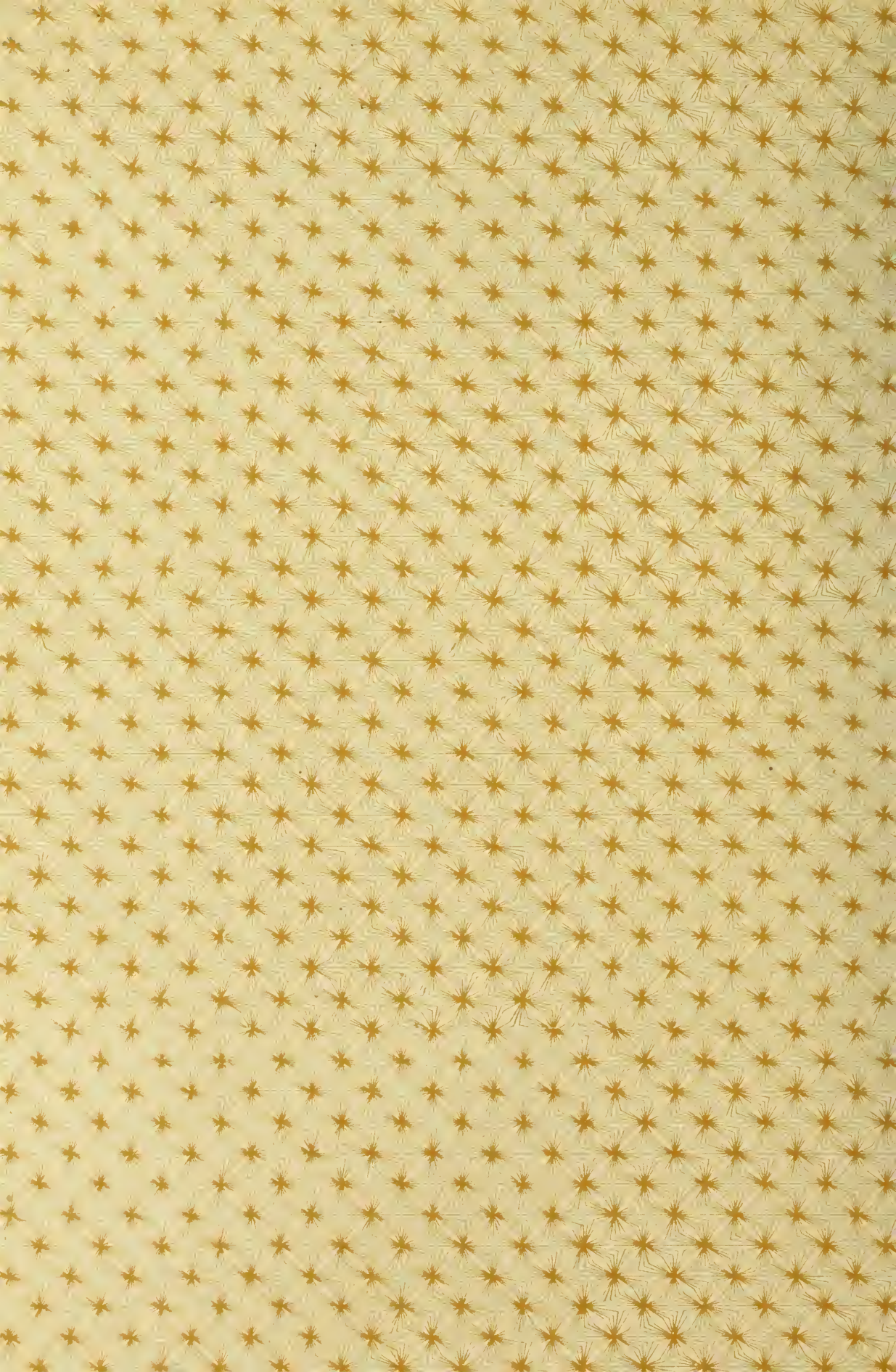
Russell - Book of Authors p. 279

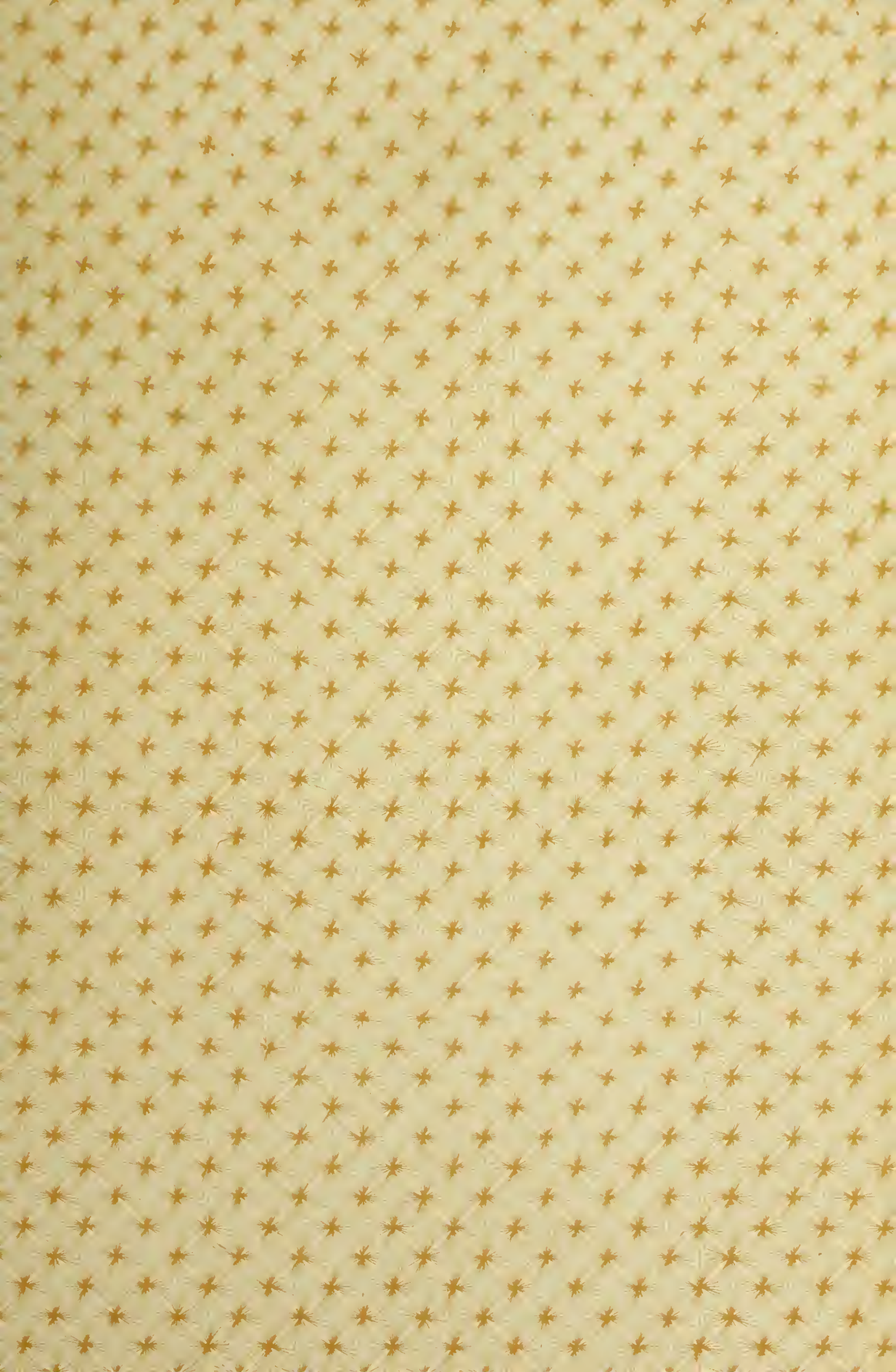
Stephen, Leslie -Dict. Nat. Biog. Vol. XXII and Note \_

Wordsworth , Wm. - Poetical Works with Memoir 3Vols.

Houghton Mifflin & Co. 1854

Note:- The final treatment of the Thesis has been formulated almost entirely from the study of the Monthly Review itself. The numerous quotations are either direct from the Review or from authors making charges or refuting<sup>g</sup> other charges.





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